1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

439 head of cattle.[1] This trade was forbidden some years ago and has probably not a long history, because early writers give no information that might lead us to suppose that it went on previous to the reconquest of the Sudan and the Abyssinian conquest of Western Ethiopia. There was some ivory-trading on the Zeraf between Nuer and Arabs from the middle of the nineteenth century. Metal ornaments and venetian glass beads seem to have been offered in exchange. Nuer may have traded some tobacco, and possibly an occasional canoe, from the Anuak of the Baro and Gila rivers, but it is more likely that they usually acquired these objects by raiding. I do not discuss here the very small trade carried on to-day by Arab shopkeepers who live a hard, and generally unprofitable, life here and there on the main waterways. Nuer obtain from them spears, hoes, fish-hooks, ornaments, and occasionally an anvil, grindstone, &c., and they purchase skins of oxen, and sometimes oxen, from the Nuer. Nuer economy has not been much affected thereby. Nuer do not sell their labour.

We may conclude, therefore, that trade is a very unimportant social process among the Nuer. Many reasons can be adduced to explain this fact. I mention only a few. Nuer have nothing to trade except their cattle and have no inclination to dispose of these; all they greatly desire are more cattle, and, apart from the difficulty that they have nothing to offer in exchange for them, herds are more easily and pleasantly increased by raiding the Dinka; they are seldom on such friendly terms with their neighbours that trade can flourish between them, and, although there may have been sporadic exchange with Dinka and Anuak, it is probable that most objects obtained from these peoples were spoil; they have no money, no markets, and no transport other than human porterage; &c. A further reason, and one that requires emphasis, is the dominant interest of the Nuer in their herds. This narrow focus of interest causes them to be inattentive to the products of other people, for which, indeed, they feel no need and often enough show contempt.

436 489

437 There is very little exchange within Nuerland itself, there being no high specialization and no diversity in the distribution of raw material. The only trading I have seen, apart from the exchange of small commodities and minor services mentioned in the next section, is the exchange of some cattle, mainly oxen, by the Lou for Eastern Gaajok grain in a famine year. I think it most unlikely that such exchanges went on before British occupation of the country, though there was, according to Nuer, sometimes an exchange of an animal for grain in bad years between persons of the same district.

[1] Bimbashi H. Gordon, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, no. 107, 1903.

5:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1947
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

BRIDEWEALTH AMONG THE NUER

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

In some recent articles I have described the Nuer custom of paying cattle at marriage, their marriage ceremonies, and their rules of exogamy.[1] Having recorded the chief facts relevant to a study of Nuer marriage it is permissible to make some general comments on the part played in the union by payment of bridewealth.[2]

It is no longer necessary to show that the African payment of bridewealth is not a purchase. Until very recent years the Nuer had no currency and nothing corresponding to what we mean by 'price' and 'purchase'. The word *hak*, now used to denote the act of purchasing something from an Arab merchant with money had a religious and sacrificial meaning. It cannot be used to refer to transference of bridewealth. I have heard the word *luil* used in this connection, but only with circumspection or in anger, for it is disrespectful to use it about marriage. It denotes a simple exchange of goods, as when a man who is leaving his neighbourhood exchanges his byre for a bull calf or when a man exchanges an ox with certain markings for one with his favourite distribution of colours. The word is only used correctly in reference to conjugal relations when a female Dinka captive is, as I was told occasionally used to happen, exchanged for a few cows. It is then said of her that "she was not married (*kwen*) with cattle but exchanged (*luil*) for cattle"

The word *kwen* means the whole proceedure by which a man and his kin obtain a wife by payment of cattle and her family and kin hand her over to bear children to them, and in other ways serve them, in return for these cattle. The

[1] "Nuer Bridewealth", *Africa*, 1946; "Nuer Marriage Ceremonies", *Idem*, 1947; "Nuer Rules of Exogamy and Incest", *Social Structure* (to appear soon).

[2] Some of the points made were discussed in a very general way in my paper "Social Character of Bridewealth with, special Reference to the Azande", *Man*, 1934, (194).

[p. 181a]

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

the past nearly always expressed in terms of cattle and often on a conventional basis. Such articles were canoes and ivory bangles (though here the basic value of the ivory must be taken into account). These were of considerable value and, as will be seen, there were in the past scales of compensation demanded for their loss or misappropriation.

(4) Imported articles, chiefly of iron, like fish-spears, iron spear-heads, hooks, iron hoes, &c. There were no iron smelters and few blacksmiths among the Nuer in those days. Iron wares were acquired from other tribes in exchange for cattle. These also had a conventional value and, in traditional legal processes, a conventional rate of compensation (*cut*).

We see therefore that there were various categories of chattels or movable property, some of which (those in the first category) had no definite or standard value because they were so easily obtainable; others which had exchange value, but no conventional rate of compensation for loss in excess of the exchange value (those in the second category); still others which had not only high exchange value in terms of cattle but also rates of compensation for loss, usually far in excess of that value (those in the third and fourth categories). The reason for the heavy damages demanded in such circumstances is discussed later. It may be noted here that it was partly due to the economic advantages obtained from the article (hoes or fish-spears for example) and hence the economic disadvantages caused by its loss, for it could not be easily replaced. Although actually held by an individual, the advantages applied to other members of his community, who would therefore assist him to obtain redress. Moreover, since it was initially purchased with cattle, kinsmen who had interests in those cattle would also have interests in the article.

Finally another form of ownership, which must be mentioned in connexion with property relations, is possession of spirits or 'spirit medicines'. Certain kinds of spirits or medicines which have magical properties may be purchased with cattle. Such spirits are spoken of as being 'owned', but in contrast to more corporeal rights, they cannot be stolen because in the transference there must be some spiritual harmony between the two persons concerned, and the appropriate ritual must be performed. The nature of these spirits is discussed in a later chapter.

Changing Values

These observations apply to the past. Clearly concepts of property relations are undergoing swift and radical changes in Nuer society today. The introduction of a money economy in itself is bound to have repercussions on ideas of property and ownership. Most articles can be bought for relatively small sums of money, and money can be

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

obtained by work or the sale of such products as hides and grain; and money can be used, apart from trade goods now in demand, to purchase cattle, although the market for cattle is still very limited.

Legal concepts based on values related to a subsistence economy only and conditioned by relative scarcity are bound to be modified when the economy begins to change, and the availability of certain articles is vastly increased. For example, although Nuer now practise agriculture on a larger scale than before and it is therefore of greater importance, an iron hoe valued at several head of cattle in the scale of traditional compensation, if it is ever stolen at all, now demands nothing more than material restitution. Another hoe can be purchased for a few piastres almost anywhere, and the threat of hardship from its loss is negligible. Hence nowadays the potential value of the hoe is ignored; only the actual trade value is assessed and, as will be seen, the wrong inflicted on the owner by taking it from him is not considered.

2. LAND TENURE, GRAZING RIGHTS, AND RIGHTS IN WATER

General Considerations

Rights in land, grazing, and fishing and drinking pools are held by those who are considered to be the descendants of the original occupiers of the area. This is particularly true of Nuer east of the Nile, for such rights are held by descent from the original colonizers. An understanding of land tenure, therefore, requires an analysis of the lineal structure of Nuer society and of the way in which areas were seized from the Jaka and occupied, mostly towards the end of the last century. The position and function of the nuclear clan or 'aristocrats' in each area who are called *diel*—as opposed to *rul*, i.e. later accretions who attach themselves to the original occupants—has already been explained. Most Nuer clans or tribes have strong traditions of an original division of land. Later accretions only acquire rights of possession by association with the nuclear lineage. This is in fact the basis of the whole system of Nuer society. Many *rul* lineages attempt to attach themselves to a nuclear lineage by real or fictitious relationship, often through intermarriage. The distinction in the latter case is clear, for, as we have seen, those who link themselves to the *diel* through previous marriages are called *gaat nyiet*, the 'sons of daughters', as opposed to *gaat tutni*,[1] 'sons of bulls'. *Diel* are always *gaat tutni* in the area they occupy; *gaat nyiet* are always *rul*, though *rul* are not all necessarily *gaat nyiet*. It seems that the word *rul* is applied with greater emotional intensity to those who have arrived and settled more recently, while those whose ancestors attached themselves earlier in Nuer

[1] See p. 18.